



Attenda

Always On Managed Services

Nisa-Today's Case Study

Nisa-Today's improves its IT infrastructure, to virtualise and consolidate its systems to support the demand from a growing customer base

The company recognised that problems could potentially occur as demand on their IT systems continued to increase. The systems were starting to show signs of strain under the increasing number of customer orders that they were dealing with. It was imperative that the problem was tackled and batch processing time reduced to ensure the system continued to meet the current and future needs of the business.

Nisa-Today's is the UK's largest buying group for independent retail and wholesale companies. By strategically using its member companies' combined turnover power base, it negotiates the lowest cost price for products and provides the most efficient supply chain.

The existing Nisa-Today's solution, based on IBM platform had been outgrown from a capacity view point and the solution was inhibiting continued growth.

Nisa-Today's looked to its trusted hosting partner Attenda, who hosts and managed the existing Nisa-Today's IT systems, for help with improving the IT infrastructure, working with Morse, to provide consultancy, project management and implementation services for this important upgrade.



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Implementing the Attenda Solution



Attenda's proven relationship with Nisa-Today's meant that they were the obvious choice to help design the new infrastructure. Their experience in IBM System p design and operation and expertise in the latest virtualisation technologies, was vital to ensure that the system was designed to be able to accommodate both the current and future needs of the business.

The new infrastructure which Attenda implemented comprised two large IBM p570 servers, running 24 logical partitions, the latest AIX v5.3 operating system, automated tape backup solution and Oracle 10g database. A high end enterprise storage solution has been implemented using IBM DS8000 SAN storage and utilising the DS8000 flashcopy feature for off host backups. The solution has also been designed with four high availability clusters using IBM HACMP clustering product, to protect the core production Oracle databases.

The new solution has enabled Nisa-Today's to quickly simplify its IT infrastructure by standardising on and optimising the use of IBM p series servers, as well as upgrading the operating systems, database and application servers. The existing infrastructure was consolidated into four physical servers and a single storage array.

Morse was appointed to oversee this important upgrade, to provide consultancy, project management and implementation services. In order to get the most out of the server estate and stabilise performance, Morse recommended that it would be beneficial to implement a virtualised server solution and adopted IBM's Hypervisor virtualisation technology for the solution. By combining Power 5 and AIX 5.3 architecture upgrades, micro-partitioning across the server pool could be applied, thus enabling processing capabilities to be shared, improving scalability and reliability.

Working closely with Morse, Attenda could assist in optimising the design of the new infrastructure and then managing the solution from proof of concept through to operational go-live and ongoing system operational management and support. Attenda and Morse were already long-term business partners and this gave Nisa-Today's the confidence that the project risk was minimised.

Wayne Swallow, IT Director, Nisa-Today's comments, "It was important that we worked with someone who had the skills and expertise to understand our complex environment," continues Swallow. "What impressed us about Attenda and Morse was the way they really got involved with us and became a part of our team in order to make sure they could align any changes with future business goals."

The extra capacity has cut the batch processing time in half, giving space within the batch windows, an important factor for the business which operates 24 x 7 and is growing. The solution is forecasted to provide at least three years capacity growth, based upon the existing business volume forecasts.

The Attenda project took 9 months from implementation, application migration and test through to project go-live and was completed to budget.

Realising the business benefits

Nisa-Today's now has a more flexible IT environment, server resources are shared and can therefore be utilised by applications on demand. This has enabled batch processing times to be cut in half, whilst improving the user online transaction processing experience.

All Nisa-Today's customers now have faster access to the Order Capture System (OCS) over the web interface, making it easier to place orders ahead of the cut off time at noon. The application can now scale to cope with the high and increasing numbers of users. The solution has increased system stability and taken out the risk of downtime, thus eliminating financial losses due to missed orders and warehouse delivery cut offs.

Wayne Swallow is delighted with the results, commenting "We are now able to process orders 20-30 times faster than before. Not only are we processing orders in 10 minutes, much shorter than the maximum time limit we have to adhere to, but it is also much easier to cater for the growing number of users."



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